

Martin Lloyd Williams, Archdeacon of Brighton and Lewes

Welcome to the 2020 autumn deanery presentation. This time last year we were telling you about the extraordinary and cumulative impact of God's people that you're part of, that you belong to, that you create right across Sussex and this year again we want to emphasise the vital significance of the household of faith.

What has changed in the last 12 months? Well, the answer is pretty obvious. Covid 19 has changed so much of the landscape as well as the activity of God's people. It has also changed the way we worship and the way we use our buildings. Of course, it has also changed our financial circumstances too.

But much is unchanged. The promise of the faithfulness of God; the priority to make known the love of God and the presence of God's people in every community across Sussex. These things are indeed unchanged. And we want to thank every one of you for the resourceful and creative ways that you have lived out these priorities in recent months.

In this short presentation, we aim to inform you about the way we are going to continue to promote and to financially support the mission of the Diocese. We want to tell you about the smallest increase in parish ministry costs for many years, and we want to let you know why we continue to believe in the extraordinary generosity of the parishes of this diocese so that mission and ministry, particularly in our most deprived and our poorest communities, can continue to flourish.

We know that many parishes will have become anxious about their finances in recent months and, if that is you, we offer understanding and reassurance. But, above all, we want to reaffirm that *the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the strain of praise away*. Thanks be to God.

Every year we talk to you about parish share, and that's because it's vital. Over 80% of diocesan income comes from the generous giving by churches that giving allows us to pay for parish clergy, their stipends, pensions, housing and training, on top of that there are church schools, safeguarding, the contribution that we make to the national church as a diocese.

Lesley Lyn, Chair of the Finance Committee

For some years there's been a structural imbalance between income and expenditure which has been unsustainable. The 2020 budget was a first step towards rectifying that. Suddenly, Covid hit and in a time of unprecedented uncertainty we had to re-forecast our 2020 income.

We have reduced the expected collection of parish share by £2.5m but you'll realise that it is far more difficult to cut expenditure. We've reduced costs by £1.3m, mainly by deferring the quinquennial improvements on parsonages that will leave the diocese facing a deficit this

year of £1m more than we had originally budgeted for , which will need to be from our reserves.

However, during the pandemic, we have seen just how resourceful the people of God really are. We now have to work on wider models of ministry; to re-imagine the way that stipendiary ministry can enable the work of everyday faith. It is an inescapable truth that the amount of ministry that we can deploy across Chichester Diocese depends on how much income we can raise from parish share.

I hope you'll join me in endorsing what Archdeacon Martin has pledged, that we are committed that even in the poorest and most deprived parishes of Sussex, ministry will continue to thrive.

Gabrielle Higgins, Diocesan Secretary

The 2021 budget has been a really difficult one to prepare for the Diocesan Board of Finance as, for so many, we've had to budget for significant decreases in income in every area except property where we believe the rental market will remain buoyant.

We're also budgeting for significant decreases in expenditure, and our watchword has been to cut or defer wherever possible without causing lasting damage.

So we're imposing stipend and salary freezes. There is also a freeze on recruitment at Church House, Hove, except where posts are externally funded. There is to be a small reduction in the number of clergy posts, mainly assistant posts and we're also deferring the quinquennial program of repairs to parsonages for a second year.

This has all enabled us to reduce the budgeted deficit for next year from £1.7m down to £618k. This is despite the significant reduction in income. Income, of course, is particularly difficult to forecast and we are budgeting for a 5% reduction in this against the 2020 budget. We will have to review this when parish pledges come in.

We would love to be in the position where we could reinstate some of the deferred expenditure, but equally, we recognise that we may be forced to make further cuts, even though they would be damaging.

All this means that the increase in parish ministry costs is almost flat for 2021. The increase is 0.36%, around a tenth of the recent average of 3%. But parish ministry costs are, of course, only a guide to the cost of ministry and support in parishes. They are meant to inform PCC's as they consider what their parish share pledge should be as their contribution towards the cost of ministry. This of course relates both to their own parish and, where possible, contributing to the cost of ministry in more deprived parishes, which simply can't afford to cover the full costs themselves, but where ministry is so important.

We've been immensely encouraged by the wonderful generosity shown this year and I want to say a huge *thank you* before we turn to consider parish share pledges for 2021.

Dr Martin Warner, The Bishop of Chichester

We are living in unprecedented times and I hope you will have gathered from colleagues that, as a Diocese, we are seeking to respond responsibly and imaginatively to the many challenges we face.

We are an affluent area of the nation and yet we also serve in parishes where there are deep pockets of deprivation. I want to thank you for your response to the challenges so far - a response of prayer, of opening our churches to be places of worship, and of hope in staffing food banks to help those who are most affected. But I also want to thank you for your continued giving, and to those 37 parishes who give above their parish ministry costs. This makes an enormous contribution to the mission of the church and our ability to sustain that mission in the areas of greatest need.

I'm asking you now please to give as generously as you possibly can. Every £1, every £5, every £25, £50 over and above the parish ministry costs helps us to sustain that ministry in the areas of greatest need. I hope that not just 37 parishes but 47, 57, 67 will be able to join us in this great enterprise of sustaining the mission of love that God has entrusted to us as we seek to know, love and follow Jesus and serve the world he came to save, thank you.